



Canadian Environmental  
Assessment Agency

Agence canadienne  
d'évaluation environnementale



## Canadian Environmental Assessment Act: An Overview

Canada 

**Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency**  
[www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca)

**Original: December 2003**  
**Updated: December 2011**

## Document Information

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### Disclaimer

This guide is for information purposes only. It is not a substitute for the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act) or any of its regulations. In the event of any inconsistency between this guide and the Act or regulations, the Act or regulations, as the case may be, would prevail.

To ensure that you have the most up-to-date versions of the Act and regulations, please consult the Department of Justice Website at <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/C-15.2/index.html>.

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### Updates

This document may be reviewed and updated periodically by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency). To ensure that you have the most up-to-date version, please consult the Guidance Materials page of the Agency's Website at <http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=DACB19EE-1>.

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Catalogue No.: En106-104/2011E-PDF  
ISBN: 978-1-100-19438-7

This document has been issued in French under the title *Loi canadienne sur l'évaluation environnementale : un aperçu*

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## Guide Overview

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### Purpose of guide

This guide has been prepared by the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency) to provide introductory information on:

- the fundamentals of environmental assessment and the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act);
- the types of environmental assessments used by the federal government;
- the role of the public in federal environmental assessment; and
- the role of the Agency.

This guide also provides references to the Agency's related guidance, which provides more detailed information on specific topics discussed in this document.

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### Intended users of guide

This guide is intended for individuals who are not yet familiar with the federal environmental assessment process or the Act.

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### Contents of guide

This guide contains the following main parts:

Part	Page
<a href="#">Part 1. Introduction to Federal Environmental Assessment</a>	2
<a href="#">Part 2. Introduction to the Four Types of Environmental Assessment</a>	11
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### Additional guidance

If you would like further advice or information about the topics covered in this document, please visit the Agency's Website at [www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca](http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca) or contact the [Agency office](#) nearest you.

## Part 1. Introduction to Federal Environmental Assessment

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### Purpose of Part 1

Part 1 of this guide provides an introduction to:

- the fundamentals of environmental assessment;
  - the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*; and
  - when the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* applies.
- 

### Contents of Part 1

Part 1 contains the following sections:

Section	Page
<a href="#">1.1 What Is Environmental Assessment?</a>	3
<a href="#">1.1.1 What Are the Main Phases in Environmental Assessment?</a>	5
<a href="#">1.2 What Is the <i>Canadian Environmental Assessment Act</i>?</a>	7
<a href="#">1.3 When Does the Act Apply?</a>	8

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## 1.1 What Is Environmental Assessment?

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**What is environmental assessment?**

In general, environmental assessment is a process to predict the environmental effects of proposed initiatives before they are carried out.

An environmental assessment:

- identifies possible environmental effects;
  - proposes measures to mitigate adverse effects; and
  - predicts whether there will be significant adverse environmental effects, even after the mitigation is implemented.
- 

**What is the purpose of environmental assessment?**

There are two main purposes of environmental assessment. These are to:

- minimize or avoid adverse environmental effects before they occur; and
  - incorporate environmental factors into decision making.
- 

**When are environmental assessments undertaken?**

Environmental assessments should be conducted as early as possible in the planning and proposal stages of a project.

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**Benefits of environmental assessment**

Timely and efficient environmental assessments result in more informed decision making that is supportive of sustainable development.

By considering environmental effects and mitigation early in the project planning cycle, environmental assessment can have many benefits, such as:

- an opportunity for public participation;
  - increased protection of human health;
  - the sustainable use of natural resources;
  - reduced project costs and delays;
  - minimized risks of environmental disasters; and
  - increased government accountability.
-



**Environmental assessments are not ...**

Environmental assessments are not ...

- [environmental site assessments](#) that are used to identify the nature and extent of contaminants on a specific site; or
  - [environmental audits](#) that are used to evaluate the environmental management and regulatory compliance of a specific operation.
-

## 1.1.1 What Are the Main Phases in Environmental Assessment?

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**Main phases in environmental assessment** Environmental assessment processes and requirements vary around the world; however, most follow the same key principles. In most cases, there are many important phases before and after the actual analysis that identifies the possible environmental effects and mitigation measures.

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**Summary of each phase** The following table briefly summarizes each phase.

Phase	Action
1. Determine if an environmental assessment is required	A <a href="#">federal authority</a> determines whether it has a responsibility to ensure that an environmental assessment is conducted.
2. Identify who's involved	The responsible party, called a <a href="#">responsible authority</a> , notifies other federal parties to determine whether they may have: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>responsibilities to ensure the conduct of an environmental assessment; or</li> <li>expert information to contribute.</li> </ul>
3. Plan the environmental assessment	Responsible authority(ies) determine how the environmental assessment will be conducted. For example, they identify the: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>scope of the proposed project;</li> <li>scope of the factors that must be considered in the environmental assessment;</li> <li>assessor; and</li> <li>timelines.</li> </ul>
4. Conduct the analysis and prepare the environmental assessment report	One or more qualified environmental assessment practitioner(s) identifies the potential environmental effects and measures to mitigate those effects. The findings are presented in a written report.
5. Review the environmental assessment report	The responsible authority(ies) reviews the report for adequacy and accuracy, and may have others review the report as well.
6. Make the environmental assessment	Based on the findings of the report, the responsible authority(ies) decides whether adverse environmental effects are likely to be significant. This decision is taken into account when determining

decision	whether the proposed project should proceed.
7. Implement mitigation and follow-up program, as appropriate	If the proposal is to be carried out, the mitigation measures identified in the report are incorporated into the design plans and implemented with the project. Where required or appropriate, a follow-up program is also designed and implemented to verify that the environmental assessment was accurate and the mitigation measures were effective.

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## 1.2 What is the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*?

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### **What is the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act*?**

The [Canadian Environmental Assessment Act](#) is the legal basis for the federal environmental assessment process.

The Act sets out the responsibilities and procedures for carrying out the environmental assessments of projects which involve federal government decision making.

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### **What are the Regulations?**

A number of [regulations](#) have been established under the Act. Some are essential to the functioning of the Act. Other regulations apply in special circumstances.

The five essential regulations are the:

- [Inclusion List Regulations](#);
  - [Law List Regulations](#);
  - [Exclusion List Regulations](#);
  - [Establishing Timelines for Comprehensive Studies Regulations](#); and
  - [Comprehensive Study List Regulations](#).
- 

### **Guiding principles**

The Act is founded on the following guiding principles:

- to achieve sustainable development by promoting high quality environmental assessment;
  - to integrate environmental factors into planning and decision-making processes;
  - to anticipate and prevent degradation of environmental quality; and
  - to facilitate public participation in the environmental assessment of projects where the federal government is involved.
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### **Project vs. strategic environmental assessment**

The Act applies only to proposed [projects](#).

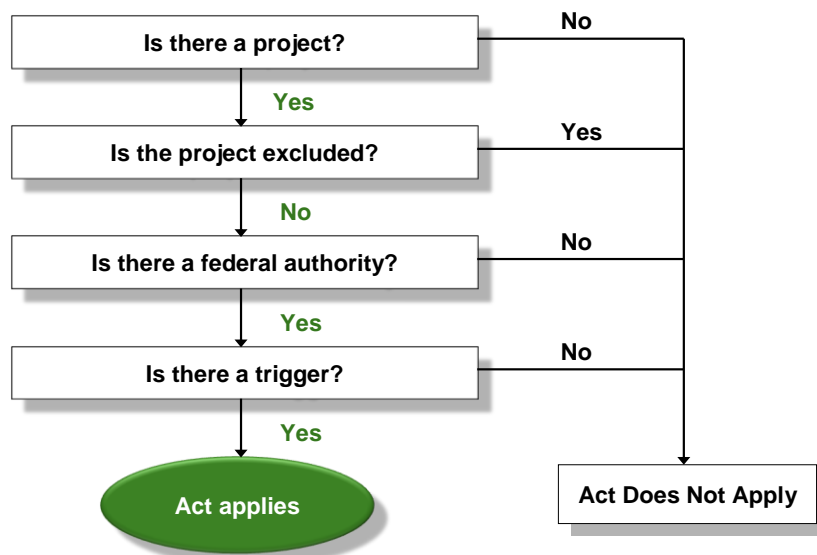
[Strategic Environmental Assessment](#) is used to assess the environmental effects of proposed federal government policies, plans and programs. While it is not legislated, there is a [Cabinet Directive](#) for its conduct.

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## 1.3 When Does the Act Apply?

### Decision chart for determining if the Act applies

There are four questions to answer when determining whether an environmental assessment is required under the Act. The four questions should be addressed in sequence.



### What is a project?

A project can be either:

- an [undertaking](#) in relation to a [physical work](#); or
- an undertaking not related to a physical work which is described in the [Inclusion List Regulations](#).

**Can a project be excluded?**

A project may be excluded from the need to undergo an environmental assessment if it meets any of the following conditions from [section 7](#):

- it is described in an exclusion list (either [Exclusion List Regulations](#) or [Schedule of the Act](#));
- it is in response to a national emergency for which special temporary measures are being taken under the [Emergencies Act](#);
- it is in response to an emergency, and it is important to carry out the project immediately in the interest of preventing damage to property or the environment or in the interest of public health or safety; or
- when a federal authority provides financial assistance in relation to a project and the essential details of the project expected to receive federal funding are not known.

**What is a federal authority?**

In the context of the Act, the term federal authority refers to a federal body (e.g., a department, agency or parent Crown corporation).

The Act defines “federal authority” in [subsection 2\(1\)](#). Among other things, the definition refers to regulations made under the Act (i.e., the [Federal Authorities Regulations](#)) and to schedules I and II of the [Financial Administration Act](#).

**What is a trigger?**

A trigger occurs when a federal authority exercises one or more of the following duties, powers or functions in relation to a project:

- proposes a project as its proponent;
- grants money or other financial assistance to the proponent for the purpose of enabling a project to be carried out;
- sells, leases or otherwise disposes of land or any interest in land to enable a project to be carried out; or
- exercises a regulatory function in relation to a project (such as issuing a permit or licence) in accordance with a provision of a statute or regulation that is listed in the [Law List Regulations](#).

**Are there any other reasons for carrying out an environmental assessment?**

If a project does not involve any of the following guiding principles: to achieve sustainable development by promoting high quality environmental assessment under the Act may still be possible.

If the Minister of the Environment considers that the project has the potential to cause significant adverse environmental effects across boundaries between non-federal and [federal lands](#), or across provincial or international boundaries, then the Minister has the discretion to anticipate and prevent degradation of environmental quality; and to facilitate public participation in the environmental assessment of projects where the federal government is involved.

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## Part 2. Introduction to the Four Types of Environmental Assessment

### Purpose of Part 2

Part 2 of this guide provides an introduction to the types of environmental assessment under the *Canadian Environmental Assessment Act* (the Act).

### Contents of Part 2

This part contains the following sections:

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<a href="#">2.3 Comprehensive Study</a>	17
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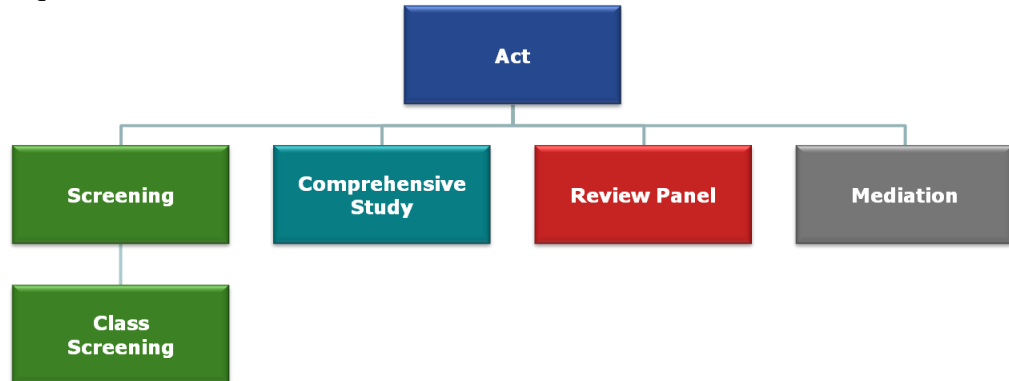


## 2.1 What Are the Four Types of Environmental Assessment?

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**Four  
environmental  
assessment  
types**

The Act describes different types of environmental assessment that may be required.



## 2.2 Screening

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**What is a screening?**

A screening is a systematic approach to identifying and documenting the environmental effects of a proposed project and determining the need to eliminate or minimize (mitigate) the adverse effects, to modify the project plan or to recommend further assessment through mediation or an assessment by a review panel.

Screenings are used to assess a wide range of projects. Screenings will vary in time, length and depth of analysis, depending on the circumstances of the proposed project, the existing environment, and the likely environmental effects. Some screenings may require only a brief analysis of the available information and a brief report; others may need new background studies and will be more thorough and rigorous.

The responsible authority must ensure that the screening of the project is carried out. The responsible authority must then prepare or ensure the preparation of a report which summarizes the findings of the screening.

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**What happens after a screening?**

A responsible authority must determine the significance of the environmental effects of the project. This in turn governs whether the responsible authority can take action that will enable the project to proceed (i.e., whether to proceed with the project itself when it is the proponent, or otherwise to provide the funding, land interest, permit or other authorization).

If the responsible authority determines that it may take action that enables a project to proceed, it must implement mitigation and consider whether a [follow-up program](#) is appropriate or required. Under the Act, a follow-up program verifies the accuracy of the environmental assessment and/or determines the effectiveness of any mitigation measures that have been implemented.

If the screening has identified the need for further review, the responsible authority must ask the Minister of the Environment to refer the project to a mediator or a review panel.

Further review is necessary when:

- it is uncertain whether the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects; or
- the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects and it is uncertain whether these effects are justified in the circumstances; or
- public concerns warrant it.

However, the responsible authority cannot take any action that enables the project to proceed, if the project is likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects (taking into account any appropriate mitigation measures) that cannot be justified in the circumstances.

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**How can the public get involved?**

If there are concerns about a project in a particular area, the public can consult the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry](#) to determine if an environmental assessment is underway.

Public participation in a screening is at the discretion of the responsible authority and depends on factors such as the nature of the project, its environmental setting and public concerns.

If the responsible authority decides to solicit public input as part of the environmental assessment, this input will be taken into consideration when the responsible authority decides the next step in the environmental assessment process.

Where the responsible authority has determined that public participation is appropriate, it must provide an opportunity for the public to examine and comment on the screening report.

There is no funding available to assist groups or individuals to participate in a screening.

**Want additional information?**

For additional information on how screenings are conducted, please follow the link to [Screenings](#).

## 2.2.1 Class Screening

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### What is a class screening?

The class screening is a special type of screening that can help streamline the environmental assessment of certain types of projects.

The Agency has determined that these types of projects are not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, providing that the design standards and [mitigation measures](#) described in the class screening report are applied.

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### Two types of class screening

There are two types of class screening.

- A [model class screening](#) provides a generic assessment of all projects within a class. The responsible authority uses information contained in a model report and prepares individual screening reports for projects within the class to account for location-specific or project-specific information. Information relating to these assessments is accessible through the registry, and a statement of projects that use a model class screening report will be posted on, at least, a quarterly basis. The Agency declares model class screening reports.
  - A [replacement class screening](#) provides a generic assessment of all projects within a class. No location-specific or project-specific information is needed, so the responsible authority does not need to prepare project-specific screening reports for projects covered by the replacement class. A statement of projects to which replacement class screenings have been applied is listed on the registry. The Agency declares replacement class screening reports.
- 

### How can the public get involved in a class screening?

Before a report is designated as a class screening report by the Agency, the public must be notified and given an opportunity to comment on the class screening report. The Agency must then take the public comments into account in making a decision on the designation.

There is no funding available to assist groups or individuals to participate in a class screening.

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### Want additional information?

For additional information on how class screenings are utilized, please refer to the [Introduction to Class Screenings Guide](#) or contact the Class Screening Team at [ClassScreening@ceaa-acee.gc.ca](mailto:ClassScreening@ceaa-acee.gc.ca).

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## 2.3 Comprehensive Study

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### What is a comprehensive study?

The majority of federal projects are assessed through a screening; however, some projects require a comprehensive study. These projects are described in the [Comprehensive Study List Regulations](#). These tend to be large projects having the potential for significant adverse environmental effects. They may also generate public concerns.

Examples of such projects include large oil and natural gas developments, certain projects in national parks, nuclear power developments, major electrical-generation projects, substantial industrial plants and others.

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### Comprehensive study process

Comprehensive studies are conducted only for the projects listed in the [Comprehensive Study List Regulations](#). They are generally large-scale or complex projects that are likely to have significant adverse environmental effects. Consequently, a comprehensive study has more requirements than a screening. For example, public participation and implementation of a follow-up program are mandatory in a comprehensive study, whereas they are discretionary in a screening.

As of July 12, 2010, the Agency assumed responsibility for conducting comprehensive studies, except those regulated by the National Energy Board and Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Although by definition not a responsible authority, the Agency is responsible for exercising the powers, and performing the duties and functions of the responsible authority for comprehensive study from the time a comprehensive study is identified until the comprehensive study report is provided to the Minister.

In conducting the comprehensive study, the Agency seeks input from other federal departments throughout the process and facilitates engagement of responsible authorities. As appropriate, the Agency also attempts to coordinate the process with the provincial authorities to the extent possible.

The Agency administers the comprehensive study process as per the Act and related Regulations. According to the [Establishing Timelines for Comprehensive Studies Regulations](#), the Agency will determine within 90 days from the receipt of an acceptable project description whether to commence a comprehensive study. Following the 90-day period, the Agency has up to 14 days<sup>1</sup> to post a Notice of Commencement and start the comprehensive study. The Agency will then have 365 days<sup>2</sup> (government review time) to produce a comprehensive study report (CSR) and post a

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<sup>1</sup> Established under the Act

<sup>2</sup> Requirement under the [Establishing Timelines for Comprehensive Studies Regulations](#)

notice requesting public comments on the CSR. Furthermore, the Agency will ensure three opportunities for public participation and when applicable, undertake Aboriginal consultation throughout the environmental assessment process.

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**What happens after a comprehensive study?**

The Minister of the Environment issues an environmental assessment decision statement. The decision statement includes the Minister's opinion about the significance of the environmental effects of the project and sets out any mitigation measures or follow-up program the Minister considers appropriate.

The Minister of the Environment also has the power to request additional information, or that public concerns be addressed before issuing the environmental assessment decision statement. Once the environmental assessment decision statement is issued, the Minister refers the project back to the responsible authority for action.

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**How can the public get involved in a comprehensive study?**

As with a screening, if there are concerns about a project in a particular area, the public can consult the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry](#) to determine if a comprehensive study is underway. If so, the public may then contact the [Agency](#) to get involved.

The Act requires that the Agency provide the public with three opportunities to participate in the comprehensive study process.

[Funding](#) is available to assist groups and individuals to participate in a comprehensive study.

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**Want additional information?**

For additional information on the Participant Funding Program, please see the guide entitled [Participant Funding Program](#).

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## 2.4 Mediation

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### What is a mediation?

Mediation is a voluntary process of negotiation in which an independent and impartial mediator helps [interested parties](#) resolve their issues. The mediator is appointed by the Minister of the Environment after consulting with the responsible authority and the interested parties.

Mediation can be used to address all issues that arise in a project's environmental assessment or it can be used in combination with an assessment by a review panel. For example, it may support a panel by bringing the parties together to resolve specific questions, such as the determination of the most effective mitigation measures.

Mediation can produce many benefits. It can be sensitive to local concerns and be less costly and time consuming than an assessment by a review panel. Participants may also gain a sense of having contributed to the resolution of a problem.

Mediation is an appropriate option when the interested parties are willing to participate and a consensus seems possible. It is particularly effective where there are only a few interested parties and the issues are limited in scope and number.

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### What happens to a project after a mediation?

Regardless of whether the mediation successfully resolves the issues under negotiation, the mediator must prepare a report to the responsible authority and the Minister of the Environment, who then makes it public. Once the report has been submitted, the work of the mediator is complete.

The responsible authority must take the mediator's report into consideration before making any decision with regard to the project. It must also respond to the report, with the approval of Cabinet.

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### How can the public get involved in a mediation?

Individuals and organizations having a direct interest in, or directly affected by, a proposed project would be involved in the mediation. A public information program, in which the general public is kept informed of the progress of talks, would form part of the mediation process.

[Funding](#) is available to assist groups and individuals to participate in a mediation.

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**Want  
additional  
information?**

For additional information on how mediation is utilized, please contact the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency office](#) nearest you.

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## 2.5 Assessment by a Review Panel

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### **What is an assessment by a review panel?**

A review panel is a group of experts selected on the basis of their knowledge and expertise and appointed by the Minister of the Environment. The Minister also appoints one of the panel members as chairperson.

A review panel is appointed to review and assess, in an impartial and objective manner, a project with likely significant adverse environmental effects. A review panel may also be appointed where public concerns warrant it. Such projects may be referred by the responsible authority to the Minister of the Environment. Only the Minister of the Environment may order an assessment by a review panel.

A review panel submits its recommendations to the Minister of the Environment and to the responsible authority.

Review panels have the unique capacity to encourage an open discussion and exchange of views. They inform and involve large numbers of interested groups and members of the public by allowing individuals to present evidence, concerns and recommendations at public hearings. A review panel allows the proponent to present the project to the public and explain the projected environmental effects. It also provides opportunity for the public to hear the views of government experts about the project.

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### **What is a joint review panel?**

When a project requires a decision from another level of government and the federal government, they may choose to conduct the assessment through a joint review panel to save time and money.

The government has developed [harmonization agreements](#) with some provinces to facilitate such reviews.

---

### **What happens to a project after an assessment by a review panel?**

After a review panel has completed the public hearings and its analysis, it must prepare an environmental assessment report which summarizes its rationale, conclusions and recommendations, and includes a summary of comments received from the public. This report is submitted to the responsible authority and the Minister of the Environment who then makes it public.

The responsible authority must take the review panel's report into consideration before making any decision with regard to the project. It must also respond to the report, with the approval of Cabinet.

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**How can the public get involved in a review panel?**

In assessments by review panels, the public may participate in meetings to identify issues that need to be addressed. There are also opportunities later in the process to appear before the review panel in public hearings to present evidence, concerns and recommendations, or to attend community information sessions or meetings.

[Funding](#) is available to assist groups and individuals to participate in an assessment by a review panel.

These opportunities are posted on the [Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry](#).

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**Want additional information?**

For additional information on how assessments by a review panel are conducted, please see the guide entitled [Procedures for an Assessment by a Review Panel](#).

For additional information on the Participant Funding Program, please see the guide entitled [Participant Funding Program](#).

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## Part 3. Introduction to Public Participation in the Process

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### Purpose of Part 3

Part 3 of this guide provides an introduction to:

- public participation;
  - the Participant Funding Program; and
  - the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry.
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### Contents of Part 3

This part contains the following sections:

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## 3.1 How Can the Public Participate?

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### Public participation

Public participation is an important element of an environmental assessment process. It strengthens the quality and credibility of environmental assessments. The public is an important source of local and traditional knowledge about a proposed project's physical site and likely environmental effects.

Through public participation activities, project proponents can obtain information, better understand and respond to public concerns, and inform people about decisions.

---

### Who is the public?

The public represents many interests, including:

- local residents;
  - Aboriginal groups;
  - local and regional government officials;
  - community organizations;
  - small business owners;
  - educational institutions;
  - public interest groups; and
  - the media.
- 

### How does the Agency encourage public participation?

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency encourages public participation in a number of ways, including:

- working with federal departments and project proponents on effective approaches to involving the public;
  - ensuring the public has an opportunity to comment on proposed class screenings and comprehensive study reports;
  - providing [funds](#) to interested groups to assist their participation in comprehensive studies, mediations and review panels; and
  - advising federal departments on how to create and maintain a public registry (see below) containing records relating to environmental assessments.
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## 3.2 What Is the Participant Funding Program?

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### Overview of the participant funding program

The Participant Funding Program (the Program) was created to help concerned citizens and organizations participate in the environmental assessment of projects being assessed by a comprehensive study, mediation or review panel. The Program is administered by the Agency.

Activities that may be funded through the Program must relate directly to the environmental assessment of a project, and should not duplicate services or written materials being funded by other public or private sources. This includes information prepared by the responsible authority(ies) and the proponent.

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### Allocation of funds

The Program establishes a funding level to be made available for each comprehensive study, mediation or assessment by a review panel. Once the funding level has been determined, the public is notified about the availability of funding and an application must be submitted. A Funding Review Committee, independent of the environmental assessment, is established for each project. The Committee assesses all funding applications received and makes a recommendation on funding allocations to the President of the Agency. The President of the Agency makes the final decision regarding the allocations. The allocation decisions are then made public.

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### Types of Funding Envelopes

The Participant Funding Program is comprised of two funding envelopes:

- The Regular Funding Envelope provides financial assistance to members of the public, not-for-profit organizations, and Aboriginal groups to participate in public consultation opportunities provided during review panel and joint review panel processes, and comprehensive studies.
  - The Aboriginal Funding Envelope provides funding specifically to Aboriginal groups to assist them to prepare for and participate in Aboriginal consultation activities as well as public consultation opportunities associated with:
    - Review panel and joint review panel processes; and
    - Comprehensive studies of major resource projects.
- 

### Want additional information?

For additional information on the Program, please see the guide entitled [\*Participant Funding Program\*](#).

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## 3.3 What Is the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry?

<b>Overview of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry</b>	The <a href="#">Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry</a> (the Registry) is a government-wide mechanism to facilitate public access to records related to environmental assessments conducted under the Act.
<b>The Registry's two components</b>	<p>The Registry consists of two complementary components:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The <a href="#">Internet site</a>, administered by the Agency, contains key information about environmental assessments conducted under the Act. A responsible authority or the Agency contributes specific records relating to an environmental assessment to the site.</li> <li>• The <a href="#">project file</a> is a paper file maintained by a responsible authority or the Agency during an environmental assessment. It includes all records produced, collected or submitted with respect to the environmental assessment of the project (including all records included on the Registry's Internet site). Copies of these records are available to the public on request.</li> </ul>
<b>What kind of records can be found in the Registry?</b>	<p>Every environmental assessment's project file must include all records produced, collected or submitted with respect to the environmental assessment of the project, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all records included in the Internet site for the environmental assessment;</li> <li>• reports related to the environmental assessment, such as background technical reports and the environmental assessment report;</li> <li>• comments filed by the public with respect to the environmental assessment;</li> <li>• records relating to the need for, design of or implementation of any follow-up program; and</li> <li>• records requiring mitigation measures to be implemented.</li> </ul> <p><i>Note:</i> In some cases, records or parts of records may be excluded to comply with the <a href="#">Privacy Act</a> and the <a href="#">Access to Information Act</a>.</p>

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**How to access  
the  
information?**

Public access to the Registry's Internet site is available through the Agency's Website at [www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/index\\_e.cfm](http://www.ceaa-acee.gc.ca/050/index_e.cfm).

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## Part 4. Introduction to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency

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**Purpose of  
Part 4**

Part 4 of this guide provides an introduction to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (the Agency), including a description of its objectives and its role within each type of environmental assessment.

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**Contents of  
Part 4**

This part contains the following sections:

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## 4.1 What Is the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency?

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### **The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency**

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency is a federal organization that reports, through a President, to the Minister of the Environment. The Agency operates independently from any other federal department or agency.

The Act established the Agency to administer the federal environmental assessment process and to promote policies and practices.

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## 4.2 What are the Objectives of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency?

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### Objectives of the Agency

The Act gives the Agency specific objectives under [section 62](#). Many of these are supported by specific duties or powers given to the Agency under [subsections 63\(1\) and 63\(2\)](#) of the Act.

The Agency's objectives fall into the following main categories, each of which is described below.

- [Administration](#)
  - [Coordination](#)
  - [Research and development](#)
  - [Compliance, promotion and quality assurance](#)
  - [Public participation](#)
  - [Aboriginal peoples](#)
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### Administration

The Agency has an objective to administer the environmental assessment process and any other requirements and procedures established by the Act or its regulations. An example of this administrative role is the Agency's provision of administrative support for mediators and review panels.

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### Coordination

The Agency has a role to negotiate agreements with other jurisdictions to promote harmonization and efficiency in the assessment of environmental effects, and to avoid duplicative environmental assessments.

The Agency also has a role to act as the federal environmental assessment coordinator if a project is subject to a multi-jurisdictional environmental assessment or a comprehensive study.

If requested, the Agency may also assist parties in building consensus and resolving disputes.

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### Research and development

The Agency has an objective to support research in matters of environmental assessment. Likewise, the Agency has a role to encourage the development of environmental assessment techniques and practices, alone or in cooperation with other agencies or organizations.

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**Compliance,  
promotion and  
quality  
assurance**

The Agency has the objectives to promote environmental assessment in a manner that is consistent with the purposes of the Act and to promote, monitor and facilitate compliance with the Act and its regulations. To support these goals, the Agency provides information and training to facilitate the conduct of environmental assessments.

Similarly, the Agency has a responsibility to promote and monitor the quality of assessments conducted under the Act. In this role, the Agency leads a quality assurance program, and may examine and report on the implementation of the environmental assessment process by responsible authorities.

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**Public  
participation**

The Agency has an objective to ensure an opportunity for timely public participation in the environmental assessment process. Furthermore, the Agency is responsible for providing opportunities for public participation, and funding for public participation, in comprehensive studies and assessments by review panels and mediations.

Additionally, the Agency has a role to maintain the Internet site component of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Registry, which is accessible to the public.

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**Aboriginal  
Peoples**

The Agency has an objective to promote communication and coordinate between responsible authorities and Aboriginal people with respect to environmental assessment. Building on this purpose, the Agency coordinates the Government of Canada's consultation activities with Aboriginal Groups for major resource projects and comprehensive studies where the proposed project may adversely impact potential or established Aboriginal or treaty rights.

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## 4.3 What are the Roles of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Relative to Each Type of Environmental Assessment?

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### **Agency's role in screenings and class screenings**

The Agency assumes the duties of the federal environmental assessment coordinator for all multi-jurisdictional screenings. In addition, for multi-jurisdictional screenings of major resource projects, the Agency takes on the role of the environmental assessment manager and the crown consultation coordinator. In its environmental assessment manager role, the Agency is responsible for coordinating the preparation of key environmental assessment documents under the direction of the responsible authorities. In its crown consultation coordinator role, the Agency is responsible for coordinating Aboriginal consultation activities undertaken by responsible authorities during the environmental assessment. Upon request, the Agency may enter into an agreement to be the federal environmental assessment coordinator in screenings that are not multi-jurisdictional, but where there are multiple responsible authorities.

The Agency manages the public comment period of draft class screening reports as well as the declaration of class screening reports. To declare a report for use, the Agency's President must be satisfied that the class of projects is not likely to cause significant adverse environmental effects, when the design standards and mitigation measures described in the class screening report are applied.

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### **Agency's role in comprehensive studies**

The Agency is responsible for conducting comprehensive studies of major projects, except those regulated by the National Energy Board and the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission. Although by definition not a responsible authority, the Agency is responsible for exercising the powers, and performing the duties and functions of the responsible authority for comprehensive study from the time a comprehensive study is identified until the comprehensive study report is provided to the Minister. In conducting the comprehensive study, the Agency will seek input from other federal departments throughout the process and facilitate engagement of responsible authorities. As appropriate, the Agency will also attempt to coordinate the process with the provincial authorities to the extent possible.

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4.3 What are the Roles of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency Relative to Each Type of Environmental Assessment?

**Agency's role  
in review  
panels and  
mediations**

The Agency's Panel Secretariat coordinates aspects of the environmental assessment by providing technical advice, clarification on the terms of reference and serving as the contact between the review panel and other participants. The Panel Secretariat has two key roles, which are to support the review panel throughout the panel review and to assist the Minister of Environment in its functions.

The Secretariat also manages communications and media relations for the environmental assessment by designing and implementing the public information program, drafting announcements and acting as the spokes persons on panel review procedures. Additionally, the Secretariat is responsible for administrative and financial procedures of the review panel.

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